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UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON, ONTARIO, CANADA.**

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# **Colonial Participation in Imperial Wars—Australasia**

**BY**

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## COLONIAL PARTICIPATION IN IMPERIAL WARS —AUSTRALASIA

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THE right of the British Dominions to determine whether they shall be parties to the Locarno Treaties has served to draw attention once more to the peculiar organization of the Empire. To the captious critic of British politics, the imperial constitution appears to be the most ramshackle of political structures; it bears all the marks of faulty design and bad workmanship; it is indeed a strange combination of the apparently irreconcilable principles of imperial unity on the one hand, and colonial nationalism on the other. The political leaders of England<sup>1</sup> and the colonies alike have been practical politicians and not strict constitutionalists or political philosophers. Political opportunism has been the order of the day. There has been little conscious effort to forecast the future or map out the course of constitutional development throughout the Empire. On the contrary, statesmen and people alike have been content, for the most part, to deal with each concrete problem as it arose and to allow the future to take care of itself. Sufficient unto the day has been the evil thereof.

The question of imperial defence furnishes one of the best illustrations of the happy-go-lucky character of British policy. On this most vital of all questions, one would naturally expect to find a definite imperial policy, or at least, a general understanding between the Mother Country and the colonies as to their respective rights and obligations in the matter of local and imperial defence. But such is not the case. It was assumed at first as a matter of course, that the British government would bear the full responsibility for imperial defence, inasmuch as it had exclusive control over foreign affairs. The Mother Country was also expected to provide adequate military forces to protect the colonies against serious internal disturbances and the local aggressions of their neighbors. Most of the American colonies likewise maintained a

<sup>1</sup>Editorial caveat: The writer of this article uses 'England' and 'English' frequently where 'Britain' and 'British' would be more correct.



well-organized militia for local defence purposes. Occasionally, colonial legislatures were pleased to place their forces at the disposition of the British government for service against their implacable enemies to the North, but they did so distinctly of their own free-will and not from any sense of legal or political obligations to participate in military expeditions outside their own borders. There was never any thought, on their part, of joining in a European war or assisting in the defence of distinct overseas possessions of the Empire. Little attempt was made to lay down a test as to what constituted a local as distinguished from an imperial war, or to determine the relative military or financial liability of the respective governments for military expenditures in peace or in war.

The navy, needless to say, was always looked upon by both English and colonial governments as solely and exclusively an English, or, more properly, an imperial institution, with which the colonies had nothing whatever to do.

After the loss of the American colonies, the British treasury still continued to bear the chief burden of overseas defence, but with the grant of responsible government to some of the larger colonies, the British taxpayer began to demand relief from further expenditures for local defense purposes. In 1861 the House of Commons served notice that the self-governing colonies must assume the responsibility for their own internal security and in the course of the next few years practically all British troops were withdrawn from the autonomist colonies. Henceforth, the self-governing colonies were obliged to furnish the men and money necessary for the maintenance of order and the internal protection of their own territories. The problem of local defence was settled, therefore, upon strict constitutional principles. The grant of colonial self-government carried with it as a necessary corollary, a corresponding obligation on the part of the colonies to make adequate provision for their own local defence. But the imperial responsibilities of the British government remained unchanged. The self-governing colonies still looked to the Mother Country for protection in case of foreign wars arising out of British or imperial complications.

With the withdrawal of the British troops, the colonies were made to realize the weakness of their position. Every inter-



national complication in Europe threatened to involve them in foreign wars, in which they had no immediate interest and for which they were not prepared. The English government was apparently indifferent to their fate. Many of the political leaders of the day were open adherents of the anti-imperial tenets of the Manchester School. The Little Englanders looked forward to the day when the colonies would declare their independence and in some cases did not hesitate to intimate that the sooner the colonies cut the painter the better it would be for all parties concerned. The colonies could not help but feel somewhat nettled and aggrieved at this supercilious inconsiderate attitude. To aggravate the situation still further, several of the colonial governments were engaged in warm controversies with Whitehall over various fiscal and constitutional questions. As a natural result, there was a general spirit of discontent throughout the colonies which found expression in various quarters in an agitation for independence. In Australia, the agitation took the form of a movement for the neutrality of the colonies, but the movement soon died out with the threatening appearance of the French and German governments in the neighboring islands of the Pacific. The value of the protection of the British navy was now brought home to the colonies in a most effective manner, and they did not soon forget the lesson.

After the collapse of the neutrality agitation, little was heard for several years of the question of colonial war policy. When the issue again emerged during the war in the Sudan it took on a somewhat different character. The colonies were little if at all affected by the frequent recurrence of native wars in outlying portions of the Empire. The majority of the colonists, it is safe to assert, were scarcely conscious that the colonies were technically in a state of war. As the wars were purely local in operation, the question of colonial neutrality could not well arise. The struggle was not brought home to the colonies in any way; their shores were safe from attack, their citizens were not called upon to sacrifice either life or property in a common cause. In short, they looked upon these wars as English wars for the attainment of English purposes. The colonies therefore did not feel under the slightest obligation to share either the risk or the expense of these distant ex-



peditions. Non-participation was the accepted order of the day.

The war in the Sudan raised the question of colonial participation in imperial wars in a concrete form. The expedition up the Nile would under ordinary circumstances, have been looked upon by the colonies as a typical native war, but for one important factor, namely, the personality of General Gordon and his so-called betrayal by the British government. He was indeed a romantic figure; a curious combination of the crusader and knight errant, and as gallant as he was irresponsible. His hopeless isolation and heroic defence of his position against overwhelming odds appealed to the imagination and sympathy of the whole Empire. A wave of sentimental imperialism swept over all the colonies. Individual offers of service came pouring in from all quarters, and pressure was brought to bear upon the local governments and legislatures to take action in the matter. There was a great outpouring of patriotic resolutions and demonstrations on the part of municipal bodies and private organizations. Several of the colonial governments expressed keen interest in the success of the expedition and offered to lend facilities for the recruiting of men and the furnishing of supplies. But only one government took steps to convert its expression of goodwill into practical military assistance.

In New South Wales the announcement of the death of General Gordon quickly brought matters to a head. In a letter to one of the Sydney papers, Sir Edward Strickland proposed that the government should dispatch a contingent to Egypt. The idea was quickly seized upon by W. B. Dalley, Attorney General and Acting Premier during the absence of the Colonial Secretary; and that same day the Ministry sent a telegram to the British government offering to fit out two batteries of artillery and a battalion of infantry for service in the Sudan. The announcement of the offer was enthusiastically received by the general public. The dispatch of a contingent, it was felt, would not only attest the loyalty of the colony and the courage of its soldiery, but would also furnish to the world the most convincing evidence of the strength and unity of the Empire. There was little question at first as to the cost and wisdom of the proceeding or the constitutional



significances of the undertaking. All other considerations were forgotten in the grand outburst of patriotic feeling. A few days later the English government cabled its acceptance of the offer with "much satisfaction." Lord Rosebery wired his congratulations to Mr. Dalley and the British public joined in expressions of the heartiest appreciation of the "splendid offer" of New South Wales.

A mere handful of citizens were bold enough at first to stand up against the rising tide of war feeling. The outstanding figure in opposition to the war was Henry Parkes, former colonial secretary and leader of the Liberal party. For the time being, he had withdrawn from parliamentary life, but he still kept up a keen interest in political affairs and was only awaiting a favorable opportunity to re-enter the political arena. The war provided him with an issue, and he accordingly attacked the policy of the government most vigorously on both economic and constitutional grounds. In an open letter to the Sydney Morning Herald, he denied "the existence of any national crisis calling for the interference of a colony of 900,000 souls in the military movement of the Empire." The war was a war of aggression against barbarous tribes who "were fighting for their own soul." He ridiculed the offer of colonial aid. "England had set her hand to this sad task and if she could not accomplish it without our aid, she certainly could never succeed with our aid."

"There could be" he continued, "no greater folly than to foster a spurious spirit of military ardor in a country like our where every man is wanted to take his part in some form or other in colonizing the world."

In conclusion, he declared his deep attachment "to the throne and institutions of England." But loyalty, in his judgment, commenced at home.

"If a time should unhappily come when England shall be engaged in a great conflict with a great power, even then . . . our first duty will be to hold inviolate the part of the Empire where our lot is cast; and this sacred trust secured, to give life and fortune freely, if we have them to spare, beyond our shores."

In subsequent addresses and communications to the press, he took the government severely to task for its unconstitutional action in raising a contingent without the consent of parlia-



ment and in sending it overseas. The military forces of the colony, he maintained, were intended for local purposes only and could not be used for service outside of the colony. Even more serious than the constitutional objection was the introduction of a chauvinistic spirit into the country. He did not want the colony to build up its reputation on a military basis but rather to win distinction "by the splendor of its resources, by the soundness of its commercial policy, by its efforts at planting a free people within the land and by its sober spirit in avoiding any meretricious military display." He desired the colony to be known as "a community of solid, sensible British people where the people of three nations may mix as British Australasians and where their object will be the industrial progress of the country.

These objections were undoubtedly deserving of serious consideration, but the people were swept off their feet by the martial enthusiasm of the moment and refused to listen to argument or reason. A special session of the legislature was called to ratify the action of the ministry and to make the necessary provision for the raising, discipline and maintenance of the force. Fortunately for the colony, the fighting was practically over before the contingent reached its destination so that the colony was spared the serious loss of life and the heavy burden of expenditure which Mr. Parkes had prophesied and which a prolonged campaign would have entailed. As it was, the dispatch of the contingent turned out to be an excellent piece of advertising for the colony.

Mr. Parkes did not give up the fight so long as there was a chance of keeping the issue before the public. The fact that he stood practically alone among the political leaders of the colony in condemning the government's war policy, did not daunt him in the least. A lucky vacancy in the constituency of Argyle afforded him an excellent opportunity of challenging the whole policy of the government. He accordingly presented himself as a candidate and proceeded to fight his election primarily on the war issue. Although the Government put up an able and popular candidate in the field Mr. Parkes succeeded in winning out by a small majority, notwithstanding the vigorous and somewhat hectic patriotic campaign which was waged against him.



It is difficult to determine how large a part, if any, the war played in this result. There were undoubtedly many citizens who questioned the wisdom or expediency of the expedition although they did not venture openly to oppose it. Since the government had made an offer and it had been accepted, they felt that it was the duty of all loyal citizens to see the matter through and make the expedition a success. They were not adverse, however, to punishing the government for its precipitous action in committing the colony on such an important matter before the people had had an opportunity of passing an independent judgment upon the question.

The war did not last long enough to permit the question of colonial participation to become a vital issue in state politics. With the close of the war the question was dropped by common consent. The fact that Mr. Parkes did not attempt to make further capital out of the issue on his return to parliament goes to prove that the question had only an ephemeral interest in the minds of the general public. In truth the dispatch of the contingent was the product of a generous impulse of the moment, a spontaneous expression of patriotic feeling; it was not intended to serve as a precedent nor did it possess any special constitutional value. The thought did not occur to the colonists that they were assuming any new imperial responsibilities or that their political relations to the Mother Country were affected in any way. But the action of the New South Wales government was none the less of considerable political significance. It represented an unconscious rejection of the provincial tenets of the Manchester School, and the emergence of a new national spirit with which was commingled a growing sense of imperial kinship and desire for cooperation.

New South Wales, it must be admitted, was not essentially different in spirit from the other colonies. She was no more patriotic, militaristic or imperialistic in sentiment. She was simply fortunate enough to have a patriot who was endowed in an unusual degree with the generous sympathies and vivid imagination of his race. With him impulse and action were not far removed; he felt the need and acted quickly, while the more cautious leaders of the sister colonies were considering how best they could express their sympathies in the emergency. As it was, Mr. Dalley suddenly emerged as an out-



standing figure in the Australian world and thanks to his brilliant inspiration, the Mother Colony carried off the credit for preeminent loyalty in the eyes of the English public.

The action of the government of New South Wales afforded a striking illustration of the remarkable change which was taking place in imperial thought and sentiment during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The era of imperial indifference was rapidly drawing to a close both in England and the colonies. The direction of imperial affairs was fast passing out of the hands of the Little Englanders into the hands of the modern school of liberal imperialists. Many factors, both economic and political, contributed to this result. In England, the economic dogmas of Cobden no longer passed unquestioned. Thanks to the industrial revolution, English manufacturers had enjoyed a practical monopoly of the world's market for almost half a century, but this ascendancy was now seriously threatened by the rapid growth of powerful competing industries in Europe and America under the stimulus of high protective tariffs. With the gradual exclusion of English trade from foreign markets, the colonies began to take on an additional value in the eyes of the British public. By reason of their vast natural resources and their rapid development in wealth and population, they opened up a most promising field for the future expansion of commerce. The Colonies had ceased to be a financial burden to the Motherland and had turned out to be a most profitable investment. In short, the policy of imperialism seemed to hold up the promise of larger returns than the old principle of *laissez faire*.

At the same time several of the leading European states, particularly France and Germany, had begun a wild scramble to appropriate the unclaimed portions of the earth. The British public were much disturbed by this outbreak of foreign imperialism which brought their two chief rivals into close contact with their own colonial possessions and which, moreover, threatened to restrict still further the few remaining open markets for British trade. The doctrines of the Manchester School were not designed to meet this new situation. The British government, accordingly, resolved to join in the land-grabbing game with the result that it succeeded in carrying off many of the richest portions of Africa and Oceania



as its share of the spoils. The Little Englanders were sorely discomfited and not a little discredited by the untoward turn of affairs. Within a short period of twenty years, a new colonial empire was created even vaster than had been. The pride of empire had come back again; the nation was again glorying in its strength. In response to the new imperial spirit, various patriotic organizations sprang up in England and throughout the colonies, with the object of promoting a closer connection between the colonies and the Motherland. At an opportune moment, Joseph Chamberlain succeeded to the colonial secretaryship. The new Secretary of State for the Colonies was quick to perceive the economic and political value of the colonies and the important part which they would play in the development of the wealth and prestige of the empire. He constituted himself the special champion of colonial interests and taught the English nation to think imperially. The colonies were soon made to feel that the Mother Country was no longer indifferent to their interests but that on the contrary, they could count upon the sympathy and wholehearted support of the British government in difficulties with all foreign nations save possibly the United States.

On the side of the colonies, there was an equally marked change in public sentiment. The former feeling of resentment gradually gave way to a sense of appreciation of the more liberal attitude of the British government and people, as evidenced in the concession of important fiscal and diplomatic rights to the colonies even in the face of conflicting English interests. A critical stage of English colonial history was passed safely. The rising spirit of colonial nationalism was diverted from the goal of independence to the ideal of an equal coordinate national status within the Empire. With the growth of national selfconsciousness, many of the colonists began to feel that the time had come for the colonial governments to assume some of the responsibilities as well as rights of nationhood in respect to outside states. "There was," said the Sydney Daily Mail, a leading Liberal organ, "not only inconsistency, but meanness in the conduct of those who complained of England relaxing her imperial policy and not showing a due interest in . . . her dependencies and then claim that these dependencies should be exempt from bearing any share



in imperial action . . . because as imperial action it would be beyond their control." The sincerity of this feeling was soon to be put to the test by the outbreak of the South African war.

The Australian colonies had been closely following the long drawn out diplomatic struggle in South Africa. It was of the greatest importance to them both from a military and commercial standpoint that the Cape route should be kept open and South Africa remain in British hands. Scarcely less significant were the close personal relations which bound together many of the colonists on either side of the Indian Ocean. Thousands of Australians had migrated to the Transvaal at the time of the gold rush. Some of them had taken a leading part in the Uitlander agitation and their fellow countrymen at home could not well be indifferent to their fate. As the crisis drew near public meetings were held in all parts of the country to express sympathy with the Uitlanders and pledge support to the British government. But expressions of sympathy did not go far enough to please many of the loyalists. The demands soon went up for the dispatch of an Australian contingent to join the imperial forces in the event of war.

The government of Queensland took the lead. On July 11, 1899, it wired to the British government the first offer of a colonial contingent. Victoria and New South Wales were not far behind in offers of military assistance. A conference of military commanders was held in September at Melbourne to formulate a plan for the dispatch of a joint Australian force, but the scheme miscarried owing to the opposition of the British authorities. The colonies, however, were not deterred by this exhibition of War Office incompetency. The several governments at once proceeded with the recruiting of local contingents according to British specifications. The response on the part of the public exceeded expectations. The full quota of men and equipment was quickly provided in all the colonies.

While public sentiment was strongly imperialistic, it was far from unanimous. The bitter political controversies of the Mother Country over the war were reechoed in the Australian colonies. A pro-Boer group appeared and succeeded in attracting a considerable following. Its members were recruited



largely from the ranks of the Pacifists, Irish nationalists, radical doctrinaires and the left wing of the working class. The Labour party was divided.

The parliaments of the several colonies reflected this marked division of sentiment. The war over-shadowed all other issues. For the time being the old party lines broke down. Members of parliament could no longer be classified as Liberal, Conservative or Labour, but were now found ranged in the opposing camps as supporters or opponents of war. The upper chambers, as was to be expected, by reason of their more plutocratic personnel were almost unanimously in favor of the colonial participation, but in the lower chambers in all the colonies there were defiant minorities who refused to hold their peace or bow the knee to the false gods of war.

In New South Wales, opposition to the dispatch of a contingent was perhaps more vigorous than in any sister colonies. The debate in the legislative assembly brought out clearly a marked divergence of opinion among the members both as to the origin and justification of the war and the policy of colonial participation. Both the nationalist and imperialist schools of thought were ably represented on the floor of the House. To the former the war presented itself as a question of political morality upon which the colonies should pass an independent judgment; to the latter as a question of patriotic feeling and legal obligation. The two points of view were as far apart as the poles and the representatives of the respective schools had great difficulty in appreciating each other's position.

Mr. M. W. Hughes, one of the outstanding leaders of the Labour party, led the attack on the government's policy with a fiery enthusiasm second only to that of his fellow-Welshman, Lloyd George.

"I say that our duty is perfectly clear: so long as we are prepared to accept the protection of Great Britain we must be ready to lend her a hand in the hour of need; but it does not follow when by the machinations of a band of buccaneers, she has been landed in a difficulty with the Boers of South Africa or with any other people that we should be led by the nose also."

Most of the speeches of the anti-war group, it must be admitted, were made up mainly of fiery denunciations of an



alleged unholy conspiracy between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Rand Magnates for the acquisition of the wealth and Territory of the South African Republic. The story of Naboth's vineyard was told and retold with unctuous indignation. Fortunately, however, some of the opposition members were not content to rest their appeal on rhetoric alone. Mr. Ashton came to the support of the non-intervention cause with a carefully-reasoned constitutional argument. He took the position that no general rule could be laid down as to participation or non-participation in imperial wars but that each case must be determined on its own merits according to a two-fold standard, namely, the military danger of the Empire and the moral character of the war. His attitude upon this question was influenced to a large extent, as he confessed, by the example of the late Sir Henry Parkes.

"It has been contended throughout this debate and outside that because the Mother Country is engaged in war we are bound not to question the merits of the war but to send aid as an affirmation of the loyalty and unity of the Empire. Now that doctrine carries with it compulsion. It is not the duty of the colony to send troops to participate in any war in which the Mother Country likes to engage. That is a matter within the discretion of the colony."

The imperialist point of view, however, was much more strongly represented throughout the debate. Almost all the leading men of the colony supported the policy of participation. Prominent among the number was Mr. Barton, the foremost champion of Australian federalism. He defended the policy of the government on the double ground that the war was a defensive war and that it was the patriotic duty of every citizen to stand by his country in time of danger.

"In considering the question of the Transvaal, we have arrived at a point when the British territory has been invaded. When the Empire is at war in consequence of no act of war of her own but in consequence of an act of war on the part of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. . . We are part of that Empire. We all remember, and I think we are accustomed to remember with respect, the utterance of a great American who, when the United States were in a similar position, declared that his motto was 'the Union, right or wrong'; and for my part, as long as we are part of that Empire, when our Empire is at war with any other power whatever, it becomes our turn to declare the motto, 'the Empire right or wrong'."



But not all the supporters of the government were prepared to accept Mr. Barton's judgement upon the defensive character of the war though they agreed with his conclusion. More than one member expressed grave doubt both as to the motives of the Colonial Office and the moral justification of the war, but since war had been declared they felt that the time for argument had passed; the die had been cast; the fate of the colonies was bound up inseparably with that of the Empire; the colonies had no other choice than to join forces with the Motherland in waging the war to a successful conclusion. Mr. Quinn, one of the representatives for Sydney, gave forceful expression to this point of view.

"Having voiced my regret that the war has been declared and my conviction that it might have been avoided, I cannot see how it is possible for any man who is a citizen of the Empire to refuse to take part in the responsibilities of the Empire. So long as we remain an integral part of the British Empire, we must share its perils as well as its successes, its glory as well as its shame."

Th's fatalistic philosophy, needless to say, did not commend itself to the opponents of the war. A declaration of war, they replied, might create new obligations but it could not change the moral quality of the declaration itself. It could not make right that which was wrong before. Neither could the colonies throw off their responsibility by hiding behind the decision of the British government. The colonies either were or were not freewill agents. Freedom and morality were inseparable terms. The colonies could only get rid of their responsibilities by the surrender of their political autonomy.

The majority of members, however, were either firmly convinced of the justice of the British cause, or felt that the British government was entitled to the benefit of the doubt. There were undoubtedly suspicious circumstances in the intimate relations of certain high placed British Officials to the Rand magnates and the Uitlanders' agitation, but over against this suspicion was admittedly the arbitrary policy of the Boer Republic towards British subjects in the Transvaal. The Boer invasion of the Cape and the attempted annexation of British colonial territory were sufficient to turn the scale in favor of intervention in the minds of most doubtful members. All the sympathies of the country were enlisted in behalf of the



two sister colonies who were fighting in defence of hearth and home. To the appeal of their fellow colonists the legislature responded by an overwhelming majority.

The Debates in the sister legislatures covered much the same ground as in New South Wales.

More interesting from the standpoint of the conflicting ideals of the nationalist and imperialist schools of thought was the sharp passage of arms between Mr. Carpenter and some members of the Queensland government over the question of the legal liability of the colonies. In the course of his remarks Mr. Carpenter declared that

“he did not want the people to get hold of the idea that because England was at war Australia must be at war.” (Attorney-General: “You cannot get away from it!”) That interjection showed how far the Premier had gone into imperialism. Did he mean to say that when England was at war Australia was at war!” (Attorney-General: “Undoubtedly.”) A few years ago the tie which bound the Colonies to the Mother Country was a very slender one. In fact, there was a good deal of talk of cutting the painter. To-day they found the Premier saying that the quarrels of England were the quarrels of Australia. (The Treasurer: “Is it possible for it to be otherwise?”) “Nonsense!” Quite a reaction had set in, but he did not want to make this country liable for every petty quarrel that statesmen in England or those who work them got themselves into.”

The divergent constitutional views of the respective parties merely reflected the hopeless conflict in their political and ethical concepts as to the justice and expediency of the war. In truth the Government and opposition were speaking in different terms, the one of law, the other of politics. In the existing concrete case it was found to be difficult if not impossible to reconcile the legal principle of imperial unity with the political convention of colonial autonomy.

The Australian press voiced the overwhelming sentiment of the public in favor of military intervention. The leading Liberal papers vied with their Conservative rivals in upholding the cause of the Motherland and in supporting the vigorous prosecution of the war.

The anti-militarists, however, were fortunate in enlisting the support of the Sydney Bulletin, the most radical and nationalistic of the Australian papers and perhaps the most

popular, if not influential with the man in the street. It constituted itself the special champion of pro-Boers. Throughout its columns it kept up a bitter running attack upon the Rand magnates whom it dubbed the "Jewhannesburgers" and their fellow conspirators Joseph Chamberlain and the British High Commissioner. Nor was it any more considerate of the Australian volunteers and of the popular jingo spirit which pervaded the colonies. In a striking cartoon entitled "Drunk," it depicted Australia as an intoxicated young man reeling around the Sydney docks brandishing an empty bottle labeled "military spirit" by way of a salute to departing troopship. The war frenzy in its judgment, was a form of mental aberration. It condemned not only colonial intervention in the present instance but participation in all imperial wars, whether just or unjust. It carried its objection to British imperialism to the extent of an open profession of Republic principles. The South African war strengthened its desire to get rid of the British connection with all its dangerous entanglements. Australia should be free to pursue her own foreign and military policies with a view to the promotion of Australian interests. Least of all should the colonies have anything to do with the military adventures of the Mother Country or its imperialist program. Australia should retain sole and exclusive control over her naval and military forces and should restrict their use to local defence purposes. The Bulletin, however, did not permit its nationalist sympathies to run away with its judgment on foreign affairs. It realized the weakness of the Australian colonies and their need for a close working relation with the Mother Country in view of foreign complications and dangers in the Pacific. It was aggressively nationalist in its program but not anti-British; on the contrary, it believed that the interests of Australia would be best promoted by a free Anglo-Australian alliance. In short, it desired to substitute an international co-partnership for the existing status of colonial subordination.

New Zealand was not to be outdone by the Australian colonies. The citizens of that commonwealth had long enjoyed the reputation of being the most progressive and patriotic of all the British colonies and on this occasion they certainly lived up to their reputation. The government immediately



took steps to secure the necessary legislative sanction for the raising and dispatching of a contingent to South Africa. Premier Richard Seddon, the directing spirit of the whole enterprise, was the outstanding colonial representative of the new school of democratic imperialists. He combined in one political creed the most pronounced radicalism on domestic matters with the strongest imperialism in foreign affairs. He believed in the Empire and its world-wide mission with both heart and soul. The Empire to him was 'an indestructible union of indestructible states.' The struggle in the Transvaal, therefore, took on the form of a battle in defence of the territorial integrity of the Empire and for the promotion of free political institutions and social progress. But with all his imperialism, he was unprepared to commit the colony to the support of the Mother Country in case of an unjust war. In laying the government's proposals before the legislature he emphatically declared that "had the conditions made by the British representatives been overbearing, harsh, or unjust, or in the slightest degree degrading to the Transvaal government. I should not have felt justified in taking the course that I now ask the House to take."

Mr. Russell, the leader of the Conservative opposition, surpassed even the premier in his profession of imperial loyalty. No vassal could have proffered a more devoted or unqualified service to the Crown. He would have nothing to do with the suggested moral limitation upon colonial participation. "It is not for me, sir, as an Englishman to inquire deeply into the origin of the quarrel in the Transvaal." The cause of the quarrel was of no concern to him. Similar views were voiced by other members of the House. It was none of our business, another member declared, "to pick and choose our way, when we approve and when we disapprove; when we will help and when we will decline to render assistance."

There could be no doubt as to the strong imperialistic sentiments of the Assembly. A mere handful of the members ventured to offer any opposition to the proposal and even this opposition was of a qualified and somewhat apologetic character. The duty of participating in imperial wars was generally admitted in principle; but the application of the prin-

ciple was denied in this particular case, either on the ground that the war was not a "defensive war" or that colonial aid was not needed. But these protests fell on deaf ears. The dispatch of the contingent was agreed to by fifty-four to five.

The discussions in the Australasian legislatures revealed a striking change of sentiment on the subject of imperial relations since the withdrawal of the British troops. The old imperial idea of colonial dependence had given way to the new conception of Australian nationalism. This new national concept found abundant expression during the war both on the side of the supporters and of the opponents of participation. The great body of supporters of the war, it must be admitted, were either pronounced imperialists or actuated by imperialist considerations. The Empire was in danger; with the Conservatives that was conclusive; as loyal citizens of the Empire they could do nothing less than back up the Mother Country freely and enthusiastically or from a sense of duty. At the same time there was a strong national element among the militants, particularly in the Liberal party. Many of the Australasians felt that the colonies had at last attained their majority and that it was now their duty as well as privilege to play a nation's part in the world's affairs. They desired, therefore, that the colonies should take their place alongside of the Mother Country not as subject communities or vassal states but as voluntary self-determining allies in the vigorous prosecution of the war. It is interesting to observe in this connection that the group of far-seeing young statesmen who were largely responsible for the adoption of the Australian federal constitution were, with few exceptions, the leaders of the movement to join in the South African war. The same nationalist ideals were in evidence in imperial as in local constitutional matters. The leaders of the rising generation of native-born Australians had cast aside much of the parochialism of the older generation and were learning to think in terms of Australian nationalism and imperial responsibility.

But the nationalist spirit was also exemplified in the views of the anti-war group. The two strongest arguments of the antis were based on moral and national considerations. These two factors were weighted somewhat differently in the



minds of the several speakers but they all agreed in recognizing that participation in the war could only be justified on grounds of national morality and political expediency. The colonies had assumed a quasi-national status and could not therefore divest themselves of the moral responsibilities of their new position. They must be left free to determine for themselves in every case whether it was to their best interests to go into or stay out of the quarrels of the Mother Country. Some of the more ardent opponents of the war desired to go even further with the nationalist programme and advocated a policy of permanent and complete neutrality. But this contention was too extreme to commend itself to a majority of the antis. A small pro-Boer or Republican faction outside the legislatures likewise attempted to make political capital out of the opposition to the war by stirring up a hostile spirit towards the Mother Country, but these efforts signally failed. In short, with but few exceptions, the nationalist anti-war group were as staunch British subjects and as proud of their allegiance as were their imperialist opponents. They had no sympathy whatever with the anti-British campaign which was carried on by some of their would-be allies. They were indeed anti-imperialist in this particular instance, but their opposition to the war did not take the form of a demand for independence but merely for non-participation. They believed that they could best prove their loyalty to both Crown and country by refusing to join in an unjust imperialist war which was opposed to the economic and political interests of the colonies.

But the old colonial spirit of dependence was not entirely extinct, though much less in evidence than in former years. The ancient theory of the sole responsibility of the Mother Country for imperial defence was again put forward as sufficient justification for non-intervention in the war. The colonies, it was urged, were in no way concerned with what went on in the outside world; they would be safest and happiest by attending to their own local business without intermeddling with external affairs. All that the colonies desired was to be left alone. The "little colonials" were glad to shelter themselves behind the protection of the British army and navy but were unwilling to share in the burden of maintaining the same

or to make independent provisions for their own external defence. They fondly hoped that the isolation and peacefulness of the colonies would safeguard them from international complications. Such was the political philosophy of the little colonial school, a philosophy as narrow-minded and provincial as that of the Little Englanders from whom it was in part derived. There was, in truth, a close political affinity between the two schools of thought in England and the colonies. They were both materialistic\* in their economic principles and anti-imperial in their constitutional point of view. The Tory ideal of a great and powerful empire meant nothing to the 'little colonials', save insofar as it relieved them from the necessity of providing for their own defence. They desired to enjoy all the blessings of self-government without being called upon to bear any of the sacrifices which freedom demanded of them. Their political faith was a strong combination of imperialist ideas and the philosophy of the Manchester School. They were Tory-imperialists in their acceptance of the principle of colonial subordination but Little Englanders in their parochial outlook and denial of imperial responsibilities. In short, their sense of imperial obligations was governed by their own local needs and interests. They recognized the necessity of providing for their own internal defence but nothing more. Other portions of the Empire need not look to them for aid for it would not be forthcoming. Theirs was a provincial loyalty which often attempted to conceal its narrow-minded selfishness under the guise of pacific ideals and moral considerations. That those ideals were present in many cases could not well be doubted. Many of the Little Colonials were genuinely sincere in their hatred of war and in their demand for colonial freedom of conscience. But the public could scarcely be censured for looking with suspicion on many of these pleas for indulgence when they saw them advanced by a political group who denied colonial responsibility for all wars whether just or unjust.

In joining in the South African war, the dominions did not

\*Surely the 'Little Englander' group in British politics, John Morley, John Burns, D. Lloyd George, would rather be described as idealistic.—Ed. note.



think for a moment that they were establishing an imperial precedent or pledging themselves to future military action on behalf of the Mother Country. That this was not their intent was amply demonstrated by the attitude of the colonial governments at the time of the Boxer outbreak. The uprising in China came at a most inopportune moment for the British government since the most of its forces were tied up in the South African war. To relieve the emergency, the Admiralty requested the Australasian governments to release two shallow draft gun-boats of the auxiliary squadron for service on the Chinese rivers and coast. The request was granted at once without question since the colonies had no particular need for the vessels at the time. Some of the governments felt that something more should be done on their own account in view of the dangerous situation in Peking and their comparative proximity to the zone of operations. The Victorian executive accordingly offered to fit out a small naval contingent for land service. The pride of New South Wales was touched and she resolved to outrival her neighbour by the offer of a still larger contingent. Not to be outdone, South Australia placed her gun-boat, the Protector, at the British service. The other Australian colonies, however, were unmoved and failed to take action.

The colonies in truth were not deeply concerned with what was going on in the Far East. They knew little or nothing about the internal conditions in China and cared even less. The proposed expedition appeared to the majority of the Australian papers and public to be a foolish imperialistic venture. Many of the Liberal papers joined hands with the Labor leaders and press in condemning the whole undertaking on strong nationalist grounds. The Melbourne Age took the lead in protesting against the alleged design of the Imperial Federation League to draw the colonies into its plan of imperial unification and aggrandisement. So strong was the opposition in New South Wales that the government had difficulty in raising the necessary forces for its contingent. The people of New Zealand were equally indifferent. Even Mr. Seddon held back and refused to be drawn into such a distant adventure. He knew the temper of his countrymen right well and

realized that they had no heart for intervening in Chinese affairs. In short, it was recognized in all the colonies that this was no occasion for imperial co-operation.

"It was no case of defending a partner in the Empire against aggression, or of upholding any common interest. The Boxer affair seemed to be one in which England alone was interested, as a country with extra-imperial commercial interests, and a member of a European syndicate; whereas the South African war was for a defensive principle, touching every partner-State, and in the teeth of European antagonism. Accordingly it is certain that if the Boxer disturbance had arisen a year later on, when the federal authority had taken over the foreign relations of the separate colonies, the Australian national Government, like that of Canada, would have refrained from proffering active co-operation."

The Australasian colonies, we may then conclude, had no fixed policy in respect to participation in imperial wars. Each colony was free to determine for itself what action it should take in specific cases. As a general proposition, they did not feel under any legal or moral obligation to assume any military burdens unless their own particular interests were involved. They were not charged with the direction of the foreign policy of the Empire nor were they guarantors of its territorial integrity. For the most part, they were nationalist or even parochial in their outlook on the world and had little interest in European politics or in expansionist policies in Asia or Africa. They were still, to a large degree, in the pioneer stage of existence, when the energies of the people were absorbed in the immediate task of opening up and developing the great natural resources of the country. In exceptional circumstances only did they feel called upon to rally to the support of the Mother Country in foreign wars. The attitude of a particular colony might be affected by peculiar personal or party equations, or by a sentimental appeal, as in the case of the war in the Sudan, but as a general rule the decisions of the colonies were governed by more important moral and material considerations, such as the origin, purpose and justification of the war, the needs of the Mother Country, the proximity and seriousness of the naval and military operations and the probable effect upon their own security, economic interests and political future. In some instances, it must be admitted, party politics



played a most important part. The parties were hopelessly at variance in their political outlook. The Conservatives could usually be counted upon to back up the Mother Country in case of need; the Labor party, on the other hand, was suspicious of, if not hostile to, any form of military intervention in foreign affairs, while the Liberals, following the example of their English friends, were apt to divide upon the question according to their affiliations with the right or left wing of the party. The early dissolution of the Liberal party was already in evidence. The weight which attached to these different factors naturally varied from colony to colony, with the result that their decisions were sometimes far from unanimous. But whatever their differences of policy in specific cases, upon one point they were generally agreed, namely, that the unity of the Empire must be maintained in the face of a serious challenge to its supremacy or territorial integrity.

Such was the state of Australian public opinion at the outbreak of the World War. The magnificent response of the dominions in that great struggle afforded the most conclusive evidence of the solidarity of the Empire in an imperial emergency. For the time being, it seemed as though the stress of war conditions might draw the Dominions into some form of imperial federation, but with the restoration of peace, the nationalist spirit of the Dominion reasserted itself. The consideration, however, of these more recent developments of imperial policy must be reserved for a future occasion.

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